

Nov. 29, 1977

~~SECRET/NOFORN~~

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: GOA Activities Against Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores

PARTICIPANTS: [redacted] Member, Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores  
F. Allen Harris, Political Officer

DATE: November 29, 1977

PLACE: U.S. Embassy

[redacted] (strictly protect) has been working with the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST) attorney who is representing detained party members/as well as initiating Habeas Corpus petitions on behalf of disappeared party members. [redacted]

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[redacted] the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores is a reform force of the left that combines radical, socialist propaganda with a legal and pacific concrete action program. The party's main effort has been to establish a revolutionary socialist front to counter the armed guerrilla effort. The PST has engaged in practical accords with the "bourgeois democratic parties", rather than with revolutionary forces.)

[redacted] called at the Embassy to discuss Secretary Vance's visit and specifically to inquire if the press accounts issued by the Ministry of Foreign Relations were correct that Secretary Vance had not in fact delivered the list of 7,500 names of disappeared and detained political prisoners. [redacted] wanted to insure that names of PST members were included on the comprehensive list. During the course of an hour's conversation, [redacted] who coordinates the party's legal effort on behalf of disappeared and detained members, presented a province by province analysis of actions taken against the PST. [redacted] stressed that although the PST was a socialist party which was dedicated to overturning the Montonero and ERP "fallacy" that armed struggle would create conditions in Argentina to unite the working class politically and although the PST is strictly "non-guerrilla", anti-subversive activities have been directed against the party in certain provinces. In the course of the conversation [redacted] described the very different provincial policies adopted towards the PST throughout Argentina:

Santa Fe Province (Second Army Corps). A number of PST members have been picked up in the Province of Santa Fe. They are questioned by security forces but they were not tortured and were released in a few days.

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Mendoza Province (Third Army Corps) From March to August 1976 four PST members were jailed in Mendoza Province. All were severely tortured with electric prods (picana). Three have been released. One party member, Felipe Andres Cervine was placed under executive detention in May 1976 and was also charged under the penal system. His trial resulted in dismissal of charges (sobresimiento definitivo); however, the government refused to release him. He is still being detained under P.E.N. in Mendoza.

Province of Tucuman (Third Army Corps) There are a number of PST members in Tucuman, but there have been no arrests nor activities conducted against party members. General Bussi, who has been tough in cleaning out guerrilla elements in Tucuman, has tacitly acknowledged that the PST are not subversives and consequently they have not been harrassed.

Cordoba Province (Third Army Corps) In the last several months anti-subversive operations in Cordoba Province have been directed against the PST as well as the Partido Revolucionario Comunista in Cordoba. Twelve PST members have been picked up in Cordoba in November 1977. Five members were picked up in October 1977. PST members have not disappeared after detention in Cordoba. There have been reports that some of the party members were severely tortured, but not all of those arrested have been maltreated. After interrogation the PST members were transferred and held incommunicado in San Martin Penitentiary in Cordoba. The jail conditions are very hard, no visits are allowed from family members and there is almost no recreation or small amenities such as are allowed in other prisons.

Buenos Aires Province (First Army Corps) This province is clearly the toughest. In 1976 from March to August about 50 PST members were picked up by security forces in Buenos Aires Province. All the persons about whom the PST has information were reported to have been severely tortured. However, of the 50 persons taken during this March to August period, only 2 disappeared -- Carlos Falcon and Arturo Apaza. Eighteen party members are still being detained under the P.E.N., the others were released after being tortured. In August 1976 there was a change in operational policy in the province of Buenos Aires towards PST members. Since that date 67 persons have been picked up in the Federal Capital and in the Province of Buenos Aires. None have reappeared or been heard from.

Partido Revolucionario Comunista (PRC). [redacted] provided the following information regarding the PRC: The party is a petty bourgeois and opportunist Marxist party. It is not, [redacted] said, "a true worker's party." Its supporters were mostly students attracted by its Maoist ideology. It was only strong in Cordoba from about 1969 until 1973 where a number of marxist and socialist parties thrived as Peronism was not as strong there as in the rest of Argentina. The only outstanding working class leader associated with the PCR was Salamanca

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of the auto workers' union. He was a dynamic leader and has a following among the working class. The remainder of the party were mostly students, ideologues and opportunists. For example, the PRC supported "Isabelita" and even went so far as to support her Minister of Economy Rodrigo against widespread demands for his resignation. The PRC has not been in evidence for some time. [ ] believes that the party has disappeared as an active organization although [ ] understands that efforts are being made in Cordoba to identify and arrest PRC members. The only case [ ] knew was of PRC lawyer who [ ] believes has the last name "Fertita." He has been sent to Sierra Chica. (Comment: Lilliana Deutsch, a U.S. high interest case, and her brother Daniel, have been accused of PRC membership.)

Comment: [ ] as the PST case worker is a central focal point for information regarding GOA activities against [ ] party members. [ ] is an encyclopedia of names, dates and circumstances. [ ] provincial assessments are in line with other reports. [ ] numbers of effected PST members appear realistic and are confirmed by Habeas Corpus petitions and P.E.N. statistics produced by the PST's lawyer.

This information demonstrates again the regional autonomy given to provincial commanders in selecting targets for their anti-subversive campaigns. [ ] information regarding the Province of Buenos Aires is in line with Embassy information regarding the disappearance problem in that province. What is of special interest is the reported change in policy in August 1976 when Buenos Aires counter subversive forces began the practice of "disappearing" PST members. The situation as reported in Cordoba Province is also in line with other reports that the anti-subversive efforts in Cordoba were directed in late 1977 against non-guerrilla leftist organizations such as the PST and the PRC. However, the information regarding the hands-off policy towards the PST members in Tucuman is a surprise, as General Bussi who has just been reassigned from the provisional governorship there has the reputation of being a hard liner.

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